



MAR 28 1988

A COMPENDIUM OF CIVIL RIGHTS NEWS

LAW

Homosexuals in uniform

Perry Watkins's record in the United States army was unblemished. During his 15-year career he served his country in West Germany and Korea and rose to the rank of staff sergeant. While in uniform, Watkins received annual letters of commendation from his commanding officers, completed a bachelor's degree in business administration and had begun studying for his master's degree. But he never accomplished that goal: in 1984 the army discharged him because he was an acknowledged homosexual. Now, at 39, the Tacoma, Wash., resident is embroiled in a legal battle with one of the last bastions of U.S. sexual conservatism—the armed forces—which, he claims, violated his constitutional right to equal protection under the law. Last month a Federal Court of Appeals in San Francisco accepted that argument and ordered the army to reconsider a re-enlistment application without any reference to Watkins's sexual orientation. The army is expected to appeal that decision within the next four weeks to the Supreme Court.

The Watkins case is part of a much larger war: the campaign by homosexual rights' activists and civil libertarians in the United States, Canada and Britain to force the military to abandon what homosexuals say is its hostility toward them. But while the attack on sexually-based discrimination has achieved significant victories in the civilian workplace in recent years, it has faltered within the armed services of the three countries. The Canadian Armed Forces does not knowingly accept homosexuals—and discharges those within the ranks who are discovered to be active. Britain also bars the

enlistment of acknowledged homosexuals. A homosexual act, said a British defence ministry spokesman, is a criminal offence that always leads to discharge from the services.

In the United States, local military commanders used to have discretionary power to dismiss homosexuals, but in 1981 the Pentagon revoked that option and declared that discharge would be mandatory for personnel who were homosexual. It was that policy which prompted Watkins's discharge. Watkins said that he had never made any secret of his sexual orientation. He recalled that he had even performed occasionally as a female impersonator during his

army service without being disciplined. Said Watkins: "The army says that homosexuals create a morale problem. Does that mean if there are no homosexuals there are no morale problems?" Watkins, who is currently unemployed, added that his court victory had generated "a lot of phone calls of congratulation—but no jobs."

Now, Watkins and Julya Hampton of Seattle, the legal program director of the Washington affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union, which is sponsoring the case, are waiting for the department of the army to appeal last month's court ruling. That step would initiate a final battle to determine whether Watkins can re-enlist, is entitled to back pay and, even-

tually, an army pension. Leonard Graff, legal director of National Gay Rights Advocates, a San Francisco public-interest law firm, said that any Supreme Court ruling would also affect thousands of U.S. servicemen. According to Graff, the military discharges about 1,400 homosexuals a year on the grounds that they diminish morale and endanger security because they are vulnerable to blackmail. Still, argued Graff, "the army cannot point to a single case in its history where someone has been blackmailed on the basis of sexual orientation."

Meanwhile, in Canada, a court challenge to the Armed Forces' policy of barring homosexuals is likely because the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms prohibits discrimination based on, among other things, sex. None has developed yet, but a charter task force which the Forces set up reported a year ago that about five per cent of the country's 84,520 soldiers, sailors and air force personnel were homosexuals. Ex-soldier Watkins, for one, has raised the fundamental question at the heart of the issue surrounding homosexuals in uniform. Declared Watkins: "Why does it matter?" In the United States—and perhaps Canada—that answer will likely have to come from the highest court in the land.

—RAE CORELLI with
MIKE URLOCKER in Ottawa,
BARBARA WADE ROSE in
San Francisco and
PHILIP WINSLOW in London

Lambda Delta Lambda is first lesbian sorority

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Lambda Delta Lambda is believed to be the first U.S. sorority founded by lesbians, but the group's nine charter members said they started out to make friends, not history.

"When you meet someone from a sorority it's almost like a built-in friendship," said Marci Kaye, one of the group's founders. "We just wanted something like that that we could have, kind of a way for people to meet other people."

Officials of the sprawling University of California, Los Angeles, campus in Westwood formally recognized Lambda Delta Lambda as a campus organization last week.

"It was very validating for us," said president Allison Adler, a junior creative-writing major.

University regulations forbid exclusion of heterosexuals who may want to join, and Krisi Burk, the group's spokesman, said Lambda Delta Lambda hopes to sign up some heterosexual women during sorority rush week next month.

"If they're comfortable with us, then we're comfortable with them," said the 20-year-old junior political-science major.

She said several heterosexual women have inquired about joining, and the group hopes to at least double its membership.

"I hope people don't think our non-discriminatory policy is a paper policy because it's not," she said. "I have a lot of straight friends and I'd like to see them all join."

Several Lambda Delta Lambda members said they considered pledging traditional Greek sororities before forming their own. They said they were frightened away by stories of lesbian members who were ostracized after their sexual preferences became known.

"Maybe I'm just paranoid, but I don't always feel comfortable

about traditional sororities," Burk said.

Now that she's a member of her own group, she spoke excitedly as she outlined some of Lambda Delta Lambda's plans for the weeks ahead, including participation in rush week, the spring Mardi Gras carnival, homecoming and other campus activities.

Also high on the agenda will be raising the money to rent a sorority house.

Burk said the sorority hopes to be more involved in political issues than most traditional Greek-letter organizations, including efforts on behalf of women, gays and minorities.

She said the group can also serve as a support network for its gay members.

"We've all had family problems or at least tense moments," she said. "We can help each other."

In her case, after the group went public she decided to tell her grandparents she was a lesbian: "Because I was afraid someone might... send them a letter."

She said they took the news well.

Thus far, members said, reaction to the sorority has been generally positive.

"Yesterday in one of my classes someone approached me and said he thought it was very courageous what we were doing," said Kaye, a 25-year-old senior English major.

Burk noted one person complained in a letter to the editor of the campus newspaper, the Daily Bruin, that if lesbians were allowed to share a sorority house it would be the same as allowing men and women to share sorority and fraternity houses. She dismissed the argument with a chuckle.

"It's not just a sexual thing, which of course everybody thinks it is," she said of the sorority.

"It's no more sexual than any collection of human beings."

Lesbians not couple in benefits, court rules

TORONTO (CP) — Lesbian couples are not entitled to health-care benefits as if they were married, the Ontario Supreme Court ruled Monday.

Karen Andrews, a Toronto public library board employee, had claimed that she and friend Mary Trenholm were entitled to be considered as a married couple under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan. Andrews said she and Trenholm have lived in a homosexual relationship for about nine years.

Her bid was supported by her union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, but opposed by the Ontario health ministry because Trenholm, a divorcee with teenage children, did not meet its definition of a spouse.

The case has been considered an important test of homosexual rights. Had the judge upheld her argument, premiums for both Andrews and Trenholm would have been paid by the library board.

Mr. Justice Nicholas McRae's written judgment noted the Andrews' argument that the couple "own a home together, share a bank account, are each other's sole sexual partner and have raised children, all of which confirms that they are spouses even if they are of the same sex."

But "I am afraid I do not agree," added McRae.

He pointed out that the Ontario Health Insurance Act defines a spouse as someone of the opposite sex, as do leading dictionaries.

"Homosexual couples are not similarly situated to heterosexual couples," he said.

B.C. schools pull lessons on gays

Canadian Press

VANCOUVER

A school lesson on homosexuals endorsed by the provincial Education Ministry has been pulled from a family life program in a central Okanagan school district. The ministry lesson book advises teachers to tell students: "Neither do people choose to be homosexual, any more than they choose to be heterosexual. It just happens." But Leroy Sloan, Central Okanagan schools superintendent, said the lesson — aimed at students in Grades 10 to 12 — was pulled after parents expressed "major concerns" about it.

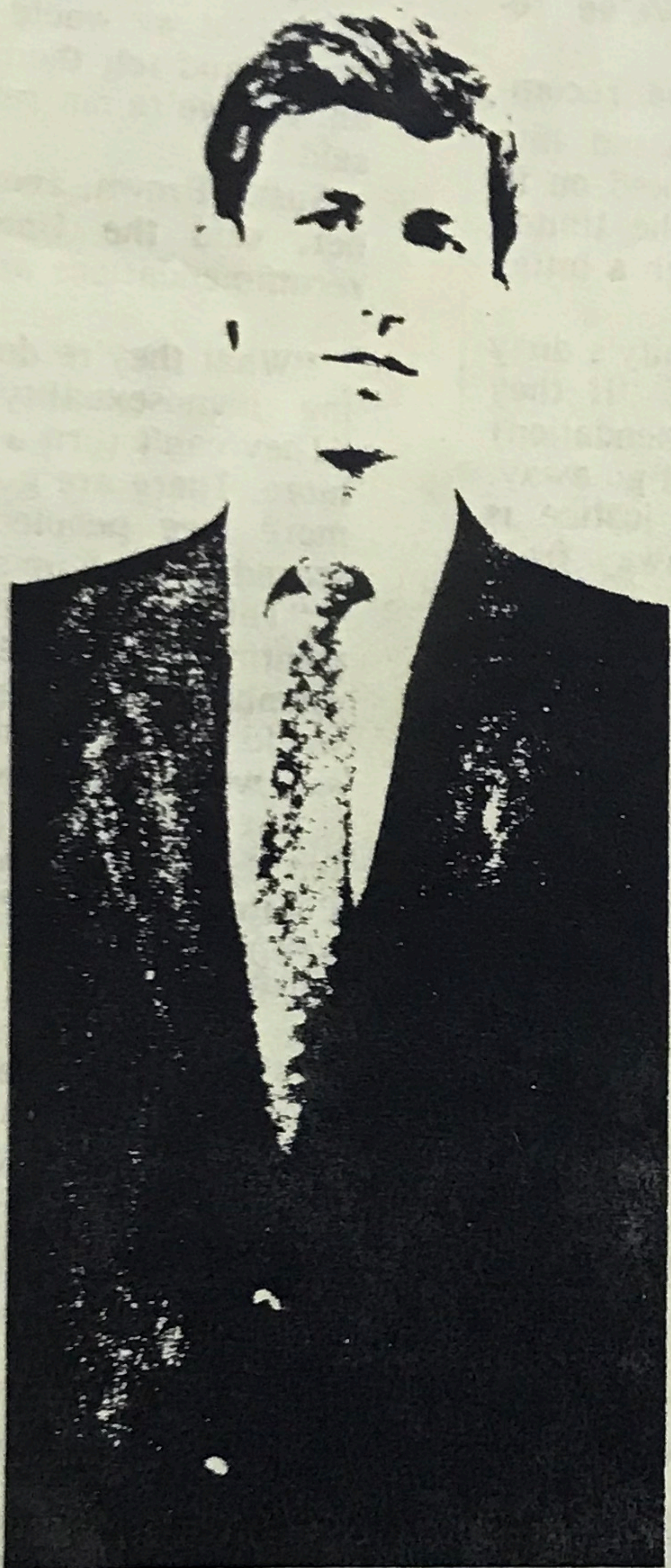
Homosexual revelations

Two nights before his dramatic announcement, New Democratic Party MP Svend Robinson placed a late-night call to a longtime friend, Massachusetts congressman Barney Frank. During their conversation, Robinson told Frank that he had decided to declare publicly that he is a homosexual. He wanted to ask Frank, who last year became one of the first members of the U.S. Congress to publicly declare his homosexuality, what the political repercussions were likely to be. Said Frank in an interview later: "I was able to tell him that it had very little negative effect on me." The brief telephone conversation was the final reassurance needed by the 36-year-old Robinson. On Feb. 29 he appeared on CBC's *The Journal* and the next morning on CTV's *Canada AM* to become the first member of Parliament to publicly declare that he is a homosexual.

Robinson's homosexuality was common knowledge among his friends and acquaintances, but the Vancouver-area MP's public statement sent reverberations across the country. He timed it to coincide with the second anniversary of then-justice minister John Crosbie's undertaking to provide constitutional guarantees to protect homosexuals against discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Robinson said that, with his announcement, he wanted to put pressure on the government to act on Crosbie's commitment. But the announcement also had another unexpected effect: late last week well-known Vancouver writer and broadcaster Laurier LaPierre, 58, host from 1964 to 1966 of the CBC TV public-affairs program *This Hour Has Seven Days*, announced at a gay-rights rally in Ottawa that he, too, is

a homosexual. Said LaPierre, in front of a cheering audience that included Robinson: "It is actually a very emotional time for me. It is the first time that someone can write, without any fear of being sued by my lawyers, that I am gay. I am gay."

But along with supportive statements from homosexual-rights groups in response to the revelations, there were also negative reactions. At a news conference, Saskatchewan Premier Grant Devine compared homosexuals with bank robbers in terms of their social merit, adding, "I don't want my children thinking that this is a normal, reasonable thing to do." Robinson further antagonized homosexual-rights opponents when he told a television interviewer that there are homosexuals in both the Liberal and Conservative caucuses and in the federal cabinet. While NDP Leader Ed Broadbent rallied to Robinson's defence, four Tory MPs and



Robinson: applying pressure

a Liberal charged that the statement was a slur against all MPs. Said Nova Scotia Tory Patrick Nowlan: "Now we are all tarred with the same brush."

Robinson later said that he had not meant to refer to any specific legislature or cabinet but simply to the existence of homosexuals in all walks of life. But to some observers, the incident seemed to typify a political career that has been marked by controversy. A lawyer and graduate of the London School of Economics, Robinson married in 1972 while still a law student at the University of British Columbia, but was separated three years later and divorced in 1978. Since his election in 1979 he has earned a reputation for being bluntly outspoken. Robinson, who was born in St. Paul, Minn., earned a

rebuke from Broadbent when he loudly heckled President Ronald Reagan during an address to the House of Commons last year and has been ejected from the Commons several times. In December, 1985, he was cited for contempt of court and fined \$750 for taking part in a Haida Indian demonstration to block logging operations on Lyell Island, off the west coast.

Still, many homosexual-rights activists declared that they were delighted by Robinson's announcement, which they said gives them their first high-profile political representation. John Campey, who won the provincial NDP nomination in Toronto's St. George-St. David riding in the 1987 Ontario election after declaring his homosexuality, said that Robinson will be an inspiration for teenagers who are frightened to admit their sexual orientation. Said Campey: "Now they can look at Svend and see that it is not a death sentence. Svend provides a very credible role model for gay people."

But questions remained over the effect that Robinson's announcement would have on his party's high standing in public-opinion polls. With the NDP challenging both the Liberals and Tories in popularity, many New Democrats said that the announcement could hurt them among traditionally conservative rural and blue-collar voters. Said one party activist: "I think it will cost us tens of thousands of voters." But Winnipeg-based pollster Angus Reid said that he does not expect any negative impact. He added: "I do not think it is a big deal. I do not think it is like 20 years ago." Most Tories avoided commenting on the issue. Said one senior Conservative official: "The best thing is to say absolutely nothing and let the reaction fall where it may." Said another: "I hope we stay a million miles from it."

In one apparent reaction to Robinson's announcement, vandals threw rocks through the window of his Burnaby constituency office. But Robinson said that he did not expect any major political effects, either personally or for his party, and many of his constituents declared their support. Said Paul Stevenson, a businessman who has previously voted for the Conservatives: "I am writing him a letter expressing my respect and admiration. I am now going to vote for him and know that I am voting for an honest politician." Still, it remains to be seen whether Robinson's initial apprehension about a public announcement was warranted.

—HILARY MACKENZIE in Ottawa with correspondents' reports

Stand on homosexuals called victory

THE GLOBE AND MAIL, MONDAY, MARCH 7, 1988

Church report earns praise of U.S. minister

BY ALANNA MITCHELL
The Globe and Mail

The recommendation that the United Church of Canada should consider ordaining practicing homosexuals is a "wonderful victory" for the gay Christian community, the minister who founded the world's first church for homosexuals said in Toronto yesterday.

"Praise God, that did take courage," Rev. Troy Perry of the Metropolitan Community Church told more than 300 people packed into Canada's largest church for homosexuals.

"It's because of your devotion," he told the rollicking, emotional crowd, his fists clenched and his arms raised in celebration. "You have dared for 15 years. It's because of your work that they have had to deal with this issue. The love that dared not speak its name will not shut its mouth."

Mr. Perry, head of the 45,000-member church based in Los Angeles, was in Toronto to celebrate the 15th anniversary on the weekend of the Metropolitan Community Church's founding in Canada. The worldwide church will be 20 years old in October.

Afterward, Mr. Perry said the issue of acquired immune deficiency syndrome could have given the United Church a perfect excuse not to deal with the issue of homosexuality.

"It's courageous because now is the time we should be losing ground," he said. "Some people are using the AIDS crisis to take away our civil rights. The United Church is willing to stand up and say: 'That's wrong.' We've rejoiced all weekend long."

He predicted that the recommendations will be passed into edict when they are voted on in August, but not until the United Church has gone through a bitter debate.

"Sex is still Christianity's dirty little secret," he said. "If they don't vote (the recommendation) through, the issue won't go away. It will continue until justice is done. You can't get away from it."

After his sermon, during which the congregation sobbed with grief, howled with laughter and said "A-men," people gathered in the church basement to celebrate.

"The United Church has recognized us as legitimate Christians," said John, a Metropolitan Community Church member who would not give his last name for fear of being identified as homosexual. "That's what I mean. Maybe one day I wouldn't have to (keep my name secret)."

Lori, another parishioner who also did not want to be identified, said a whole week of victories for the Canadian gay community —

including the United Church recommendations and the first acknowledgement by a federal politician, Svend Robinson, that he is homosexual — have given her courage.

"We were kidding ourselves last week that we would go up to our bosses and tell them we're lesbian. But we're not ready yet," she said.

Susan Brown, another parishioner, said the United Church's recommendations were "gutsy."

"What they're doing is condoning homosexuality," she said. "They can't turn a blind eye any more. There are going to be a lot more free people who are too scared to speak up now."

"This is our home," she said, pointing to the other congregation members. "We feel safe here. It would be nice if others could feel safe where they are."

But Rev. Brent Hawkes, minister of one of the two Metropolitan Community Church congregations in Toronto, said he is not ready to celebrate until the United Church recommendations are passed.

"It's a great report," he said. "But what are they going to do with it? It could potentially be a wonderful gift. But if it is rejected, that will cause a lot of pain."

Recommendation debated in Port Hope

BY LILA SARICK
The Globe and Mail

Parishioners at Port Hope United Church wrestled with their consciences yesterday morning as their church took a lead in debating whether practicing homosexuals should be ordained as ministers.

Led by pastor Rev. Duncan White, the 200 church-goers often struggled to find the right words as they responded to the latest proposal for change in the United Church of Canada, a report released on Friday recommending that homosexuals should be considered for ordination.

"This type of change can only come about if there is a deep sense of consensus within the United Church, if there is a deep feeling among congregations, and I don't think there is," Mr. White, who sat on the 13-member committee that drafted the recommendations, told the congregation. He submitted one of two dissent-

ing statements appended to the final report.

The resolutions will be debated by clergy and lay people at the United Church's biennial General Council meeting in August.

"I couldn't agree it (homosexuality) was a gift of God and I still don't," he said, adding that the church needs to proceed slowly, first welcoming homosexuals into congregations and later discussing ordination.

Many of the those attending the church service also had difficulty endorsing the committee's recommendations. And like Mr. White, they feel the committee, which was composed of three homosexuals, one former homosexual and nine heterosexuals, did not reflect most United Church members.

"Perhaps it won't pass because there won't be the same bias when it comes to council. I hope the council won't let it go through," said Mary Elliott, a member of the congregation.

Mr. White urged parishioners not to leave

the church over the debate, but to draft petitions to be sent to the General Council, expressing their views.

During an open discussion, often punctuated by applause for speakers who opposed the resolutions, several speakers said homosexual ministers should not serve as role models for children.

"As a family man, I would find it very disturbing to explain to my son or daughter that in God's eyes this is right," said David Turck, one of the parishioners.

But some church members said that although they did not approve of homosexuality, they welcomed gays and lesbians to join the United Church. A handful said they endorsed the report.

Other parishioners said that if homosexual ordination was approved, they would leave the church.